

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding grounds of rejection are respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the remarks that follow.

At the outset, applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication that claims 7, 9, 10 and 12-16 have been allowed, and that claims 3 and 17 contain allowable subject matter.

By this proposed Amendment, applicants have rewritten independent claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 3. In this regard, certain text in claim 1 has been rearranged to improve the clarity of the sequence of steps. At the same time, dependent claim 3 has been canceled.

Dependent claim 6 has been amended to refer to step (d) rather than step (b), for the sake of consistency in light of the changes to independent claim 1.

Claims 7, 13 and 15 have been amended in minor respects to clarify the claims and to remove redundant language

With the above changes, it is respectfully submitted that all of the remaining claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 12-17 are now in condition for immediate allowance and early passage to issue is requested. In the event, however, any small matters remain outstanding, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned so that the prosecution of this application can be expeditiously concluded.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in the fee(s) filed, or asserted to be filed, or which should have been filed herewith (or with any paper hereafter filed in this application by this firm) to our Account No. 14-1140.

ASHAR ET AL.  
Appl. No. 10/752,491

Respectfully submitted,

**NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.**

By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Keenan", written over a horizontal line.

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